THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) No employment has been offered as the extant rules do not provide for employment to dependants of victims of train accidents. However, one case of employment is under process on compassionate ground for the ward of the railway employee of Khurda Road Division who died in the accident. This case is covered under the rujes of compassionate ground appointments on Railways.

Eastern dedicate freight corridor

1610. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:
SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN:
Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the status of eastern corridor part of Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project;

(b) the total cost of the eastern freight corridor project and tentative schedule of completion:

(c) the funding pattern and debt equity ratio of the DFC project;

(d) the total land required for the project;

(e) whether any construction work has started beyond Sonnagar towards Dankuni; and

(f) if not, the reason therefor and expected date of commencement of the work in the above section?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (d) The Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor from Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni near Kolkata covering a length of 1806 Kilometers is expected to cost, as per present estimates, approximately Rs.22,196 crores. The requirement of land for the Ludhiana-Sonnagar portion is approximately 4300 hectares and that for Sonnagar-Dankuni would be known after the completion of Final Location Survey. Notification for land acquisition under Section 20-A of the Railway (Amendment) Act, 2008, for Ludhiana-Sonnagar Portion, has been issued for about 3,300 hectares. The debt-equity ratio of the project would be within 2:1 and funding from World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been sought for the Project. The first construction contract for 105 Kilometers from New Karwandia to New Ganjkhwaja of Sonnagar-Mughalsarai section has been awarded. The tentative schedule of completion of the project, subject to availability of land and funds, is 2016-17.

(e) and (f) No, Sir. Work would commence only after completion of Final Location Survey work.

Operating ratio of railways

1611. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE:
SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN:
Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the highest operating ratio of Railways achieved during last decade since 1999-2000;

(b) the lowest operating ratio during the same period;

(c) the steps taken to bring down operating ratio further; and

(d) the targeted operating ratio for the next five years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) The highest operating ratio achieved during last decade since 1999-2000 was 98.34% in 2000-01 and the lowest operating ratio achieved was 75.94% in 2007-08.

(c) and (d) Although no definite targets for the Operating Ratio have been kept for the future years, it is a constant endeavour on part of the Railways to reduce the Operating Ratio by augmenting earnings and containing the working expenses. In order to generate more revenue, railways are continuously striving to capture more and more traffic. Besides creation of additional capacity, the thrust is also on optimum utilization of the existing one. In this regard, the initiatives under freight business segment include plans to improve throughput through increased productivity and efficiency, reduction in wagon turn around time, simplification and rationalization of freight structure and goods tariff, discount on incremental traffic in empty flow direction and lean season, new premium registration scheme etc. Besides, introducing new trains, initiatives under passenger and parcel business segments include extension of PRS and UTS facilities to more and more locations, speeding up of trains, review of trains with low patronage, deployment of additional coaches in well patronized trains, additional leasing of parcel space in certain nominated trains, leasing of vacant compartment of guard in front of SLR coach, etc.

Apart from above, all possible measures are being taken to control expenditure which broadly include tight control over expenditure in areas such as fuel/power consumption, contractual payments, purchase of materials etc., productive use of manpower and efforts at staff right-sizing, better utilization of assets, improvement in inventory management and various steps to reduce the cost of operation and maintenance of rolling stock, etc. The expenditure in the coming years will also reduce as the arrear payments on account of VI Central Pay Commission will not recur beyond 2009-10 thereby helping the Operating Ratio to improve.

Children working in gauge conversion work

†1612. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that country's children are working in gauge conversion work progressing on the Gorakhpur-Nautanva rail lines and for which they are being paid only 13 rupees;

(b) whether Government proposes to take any action in this regard; and

(c) if so, by when and how along with the details thereof?

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.